

Heart Disease and Women: Be Physically Active

CORONARY HEART DISEASE is a woman's concern. Every woman's concern. One in ten American women 45 to 64 years of age has some form of heart disease, and this increases to one in four women over 65. Another 1.6 million women have had a stroke. Both heart disease and stroke are known as cardiovascular diseases, which are serious disorders of the heart and blood vessel system.

Regular physical activity can help you reduce your risk of coronary heart disease. Being active helps women take off extra pounds, helps to control blood pressure, lessens a diabetic's need for insulin, and boosts the level of "good" HDL-cholesterol. Some studies also show that being inactive increases the risk of heart attack.

WHAT KIND OF ACTIVITY PROMOTES HEART HEALTH?

Even low- to moderate-intensity activity can help lower the risk of heart disease. Examples of such activity are pleasure walking, stair climbing, gardening, yardwork, moderate-to-heavy housework, dancing, and home exercise. To get heart benefits from these activities, do one or more of them every day.

More vigorous exercise improves the fitness of the

heart, which can lower heart disease risk still more. This kind of activity is called "aerobic" and includes jogging, swimming, and jumping rope. Walking, bicycling, and dancing can also strengthen your heart, if you do them briskly for at least 30 minutes, three or four times a week.

Most people do not need to see a doctor before they start a gradual, sensible program of physical activity. But do consult your doctor

before you start or increase physical activity if you:

- ▲ have heart trouble or have had a heart attack
- ▲ are taking medicine for high blood pressure or a heart condition
- ▲ are over 50 years old and are not used to energetic activity
- ▲ have a family history of developing heart disease at a young age

THE KEYS TO SUCCESS

Go slow. Build up your activity level gradually. For example, if you are inactive now and want to begin walking regularly, you might begin slowly with a 10-15-minute walk, three times a week. As you become more fit, you can increase the sessions to every day, and if you wish, you can make each session longer.

If you choose a fairly vigorous activity, begin each session slowly. Allow a 5-minute period of stretching and slow movement to give your body a chance to "warm up." At the end of your workout, take another 5 minutes to "cool down" with a slower exercise pace.

Listen to your body. A certain amount of stiffness is normal at first. But if you hurt a joint or pull a muscle or tendon, stop the activity



Heart Disease Risk Factors

Risk factors are habits or traits that make a person more likely to develop a disease. Many of those for heart disease can be controlled. These include:

- ▲ Cigarette smoking
- ▲ High blood pressure
- ▲ High blood cholesterol
- ▲ Overweight
- ▲ Physical inactivity
- ▲ Diabetes

The more risk factors you have, the greater your risk. So take action—take control!



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Heart Disease and Women: Getting Physical

Move It and Lose It

Activities	Calories Burned per Hour*
Sitting Quietly	80
Standing Quietly	95
Light Activity Office work Cleaning house Playing golf	240
Moderate Activity Walking briskly (3.5 mph) Gardening Bicycling (5.5 mph) Dancing	370
Strenuous Activity Jogging (9 min. per mile) Swimming	580
Very Strenuous Activity Running (7 min. per mile) Racquetball Skiing	740

*For a healthy 140-pound woman. If you weigh more than 140 pounds, you will probably burn more calories per hour. If you weigh less, you will probably burn fewer calories per hour.

Source: Dietary Guidelines for Americans, U.S. Department of Agriculture/U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1990.

for several days to avoid more serious injury. Most minor muscle and joint problems can be relieved by rest and over-the-counter painkillers.

Pay attention to warning signals. While regular physical activity can strengthen your heart, some types of activity may worsen existing heart problems. Warning signals include sudden dizziness, cold sweat, paleness,

fainting, or pain or pressure in your upper body just after exercising. If you notice any of these signs, stop the activity and call your doctor immediately.

Check the weather report. On hot, humid days, do outdoor activity during the cooler and less humid parts of the day. Wear light, loose-fitting clothing and drink lots of water before, during, and after the activity. On cold

days, wear one layer less of clothing than you would wear if you were outside but not exercising. Also wear gloves and a hat.

Keep at it. Unless you have to stop your regular physical activity for a health reason, stay with it. Set small, short-term goals for yourself. If you find yourself becoming bored, try doing the activity with a friend or family member. Or switch to another activity. The health rewards of regular physical activity are well worth the effort.

MAKING OPPORTUNITIES

To become more physically active throughout your day, take advantage of any opportunity to get up and move around. For example:

- ▲ Use the stairs—up and down—instead of the elevator. Start with one flight of stairs and gradually build up to more.
- ▲ Park a few blocks from the office or store and walk the rest of the way. Or if you ride on public transportation, get off a stop or two early and walk a few blocks.
- ▲ Instead of eating that extra snack, take a brisk stroll around the neighborhood.

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A Sample Walking Program

	Warm Up	Target Zone Exercising *	Cool Down Time	Total Time
Week 1				
Session A	Walk normally 5 min.	Then walk briskly 5 min.	Then walk normally 5 min.	15 min.
Session B	Repeat above pattern			
Session C	Repeat above pattern			
Continue with at least three exercise sessions during each week of the program. If you find a particular week's pattern tiring, repeat it before going on to the next pattern. You do not have to complete the walking program in 12 weeks.				
Week 2	Walk 5 min.	Walk briskly 7 min.	Walk 5 min.	17 min.
Week 3	Walk 5 min.	Walk briskly 9 min.	Walk 5 min.	19 min.
Week 4	Walk 5 min.	Walk briskly 11 min.	Walk 5 min.	21 min.
Week 5	Walk 5 min.	Walk briskly 13 min.	Walk 5 min.	23 min.
Week 6	Walk 5 min.	Walk briskly 15 min.	Walk 5 min.	25 min.
Week 7	Walk 5 min.	Walk briskly 18 min.	Walk 5 min.	28 min.
Week 8	Walk 5 min.	Walk briskly 20 min.	Walk 5 min.	30 min.
Week 9	Walk 5 min.	Walk briskly 23 min.	Walk 5 min.	33 min.
Week 10	Walk 5 min.	Walk briskly 26 min.	Walk 5 min.	36 min.
Week 11	Walk 5 min.	Walk briskly 28 min.	Walk 5 min.	38 min.
Week 12	Walk 5 min.	Walk briskly 30 min.	Walk 5 min.	40 min.

Week 13 on:

Check your pulse periodically to see if you are exercising within your target zone. As you get more in shape, try exercising within the upper range of your target zone. Gradually increase your brisk walking time to 30 to 60 minutes, three or four times a week. Remember that your goal is to get the benefits you are seeking and enjoy your activity.

*Here's how to check if you are within your target heart rate zone:

1. Right after you stop exercising, take your pulse: Place the tips of your first two fingers lightly over one of the blood vessels on your neck, just to the left or right of your Adam's apple. Or try the pulse spot inside your wrist just below the base of your thumb.
2. Count your pulse for 10 seconds and multiply the number by 6.
3. Compare the number to the right grouping below: Look for the age grouping that is closest to your age and read the line across. For example, if you are 43, the closest age on the chart is 45; the target zone is 88-131 beats per minute.

Age	Target Heart Rate Zone
20 years	100-150 beats per minute
25 years	98-146 beats per minute
30 years	95-142 beats per minute
35 years	93-138 beats per minute
40 years	90-135 beats per minute
45 years	88-131 beats per minute
50 years	85-127 beats per minute
55 years	83-123 beats per minute
60 years	80-120 beats per minute
65 years	78-116 beats per minute
70 years	75-113 beats per minute

Source: *Exercise and Your Heart*, National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute/American Heart Association, NIH Publication No. 93-1677.



**Heart Disease and Women:
Getting Physical**

- ▲ Do housework, such as vacuuming, at a brisker pace.
- ▲ Mow your own lawn.
- ▲ Carry your own groceries.
- ▲ Take an exercise break—get up and stretch, walk around and give your muscles and mind a chance to relax.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

If you want to know more about keeping your heart healthy, the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) has available free fact sheets on the following subjects: preventing high blood pressure, preventing high blood cholesterol, quitting smoking, and heart disease risk factors for women.

Contact:

NHLBI Information Center
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The Benefits of Regular Physical Activity

Regular activity can help you *feel better* because it:

- ▲ Boosts energy
- ▲ Helps you cope with stress
- ▲ Improves self-image
- ▲ Increases resistance to fatigue
- ▲ Helps counter anxiety and depression
- ▲ Helps you relax and feel less tense
- ▲ Improves your ability to fall asleep and sleep well
- ▲ Provides an easy way to share time with friends or family and an opportunity to meet new friends

Regular activity can help you *look better* because it:

- ▲ Tones muscles
- ▲ Burns off calories to help lose extra pounds or to help you stay at your desirable weight—each pound requires you to burn off 3,500 more calories than you take in
- ▲ Helps control your appetite